

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

July 15, 2004

8:00 a.m.

*Justice and Law Enforcement Center
575 South 10th Street*

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| <i>Members Present</i> | Jon Camp Jim Fram (absent) Lynnie Green Matt Harris (absent) Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth Lori McClug (absent) | Annette McRoy (absent) Sachit Nadkarni Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk Clay Smith (absent) | Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner |
| <i>Others Present</i> | Jason Albers David Cary Carol Connor Brandon Garrett | Ann Harrell Marvin Krout Dallas McGee Polly McMullen | Kent Morgan Brian Praeuner Michele Abendroth |

1. Call to Order

Jon Weinberg called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. He began by introducing the Downtown Master Plan consultants, George Crandall and Don Arambula, of Crandall Arambula.

2. Presentation and Discussion

George Crandall stated that they will begin with a PowerPoint presentation that will give a sense of the scope and process.

He stated that a team has been assembled and includes two sub-consultants, Economics Research Associates and Nelson/Nygaard, as well as local consultants if needed.

The scope of the work is a three phase process with the three phases being “starting the process,” “designing,” and “implementing.” It is a systematic process, that goes from the very general to more specific venues.

Mr. Crandall then provided a brief history of his consulting firm. They are a small firm out of Portland with their specialty being revitalizing cities. They have been in the business since 1983. Portland is often viewed as a model, and although they have made mistakes, they have learned from them over the years. They have worked on many projects in Portland. They turned a freeway into a green park. They reclaimed the waterfront for the public. They turned a parking lot into an open space. There is also a lot of rehabilitation and new housing in the downtown. They have an active transit system and streets with lots of activity. It is a great place for children, which, in the end, is a good test for any city.

They have done smaller projects as well as many projects outside of Portland. They created a “Main Street” project in Hillsboro, Oregon, which is considered the poster child for new urbanism. They also implemented a downtown revitalization retail project in Milwaukee, which is similar in size and demographics to Lincoln.

They have also built projects and worked with developers, so they have a sense of what it takes to build a project. They are sensitive to the historic context of communities and will work with Lincoln’s history to use it in a positive way. Pedestrian/bicycle facilities are also an important part of any project. They have completed many streetscapes projects as well. The important thing is that they will bring a diverse background to this project.

Mr. Crandall then stated that a question often arises regarding why we need to plan. There are a number of reasons. Every one of the cities that were successful in revitalization efforts did the same thing and had a plan. The focus is to save the downtown first. In the end, attractive cities will thrive and unattractive ones will decay. The challenge is to do this in Lincoln and make it very attractive.

In answering the question of “What is planning?”, Mr. Crandall stated that a simple answer, one to which they subscribe, is that urban planning should be defined as public action (catalyst projects) that will produce a sustained and widespread private market reaction. That is precisely what has occurred wherever urban planning has been successful. Catalyst projects are strategically located, change the public’s perception of an area, stimulate new development, and produce revenue to offset the cost of improvements.

Next, Mr. Crandall reviewed why most planning attempts are unsuccessful. In evaluating a planning process, they look at four factors including the process, public involvement, design proposals, and implementation strategy. In unsuccessful projects, the process has been arbitrary, the public involvement has not been meaningful, design proposals have been vague, and the implementation strategy has been non-existent or weak. To fix that, the process must be systematic and must be driven by public involvement. A typical budget distribution is 70% in phase 1, 25% in phase 2, and 5% in phase 3. In Lincoln’s process, the distribution will be 14% in phase 1, 50% in phase 2, and 36% in phase 3.

The public involvement process will consist of community workshops, site visits, information kiosks, and newspaper articles. A typical workshop will be two hours with the first part being a presentation and the second part a workshop. The presentation will include project goals, the work program and schedule, the results from the last meeting, alternatives and possibilities, and questions. The workshop will include table discussions, reports and ballot completion. The ballots are an important part of the process because they can record the issues that people are in agreement or disagreement about, and also because a person who dominates the verbal discussion may see that their opinion is in the minority. The educational piece is important so that everyone understands what the proposal is.

Don Arambula continued the presentation with the design proposal. They have developed a development capacity diagram, or essentially a build-out diagram. When they develop these, they look at the big idea first of all. From there, they take specific elements or parts of the plan and break it into portions. Then they break down the open space. There are specific uses that

must be well defined.

Mr. Crandall stated that the implementation strategy will have six action items, including organization, retail revitalization strategies, top priority projects, time sensitive projects, a final plan document, and regulations and guidelines. The investment ratio of public to private investments must also be estimated. He concluded by stating that success is all but guaranteed if everything is done right. He then opened the floor up for questions.

Michelle Waite commented that she feels public involvement is crucial. She asked how they envision the committee's involvement in the workshops. Mr. Crandall replied that they encourage the committee to come and participate along with everyone else. They also will meet with the committee the day following the workshop.

Jessica Kennedy asked if they will meet with the 12th Streets Arts Corridor committee. Mr. Crandall stated that will seek input from any and all groups, and they welcome that opportunity.

Mr. Crandall then asked each of the members of the committee to state their top concern or issue with downtown.

Ed Swotek commented that he would like to ensure that all of the components work together to achieve more than their separate parts could. He would like to create a family-friendly environment in downtown.

Deb Johnson stated that when you come downtown, you are fighting buses, bikes and cars in the same lanes. Public land use is important in downtown, and there is a lot of prime property that is not being used.

Nader Sepahpur stated that there are long stretches with no pedestrian flow and too many breaks in retail.

Lynn Green commented that her biggest concern is if Lincoln is ready for this and if consensus will be reached.

Jane Stricker noted that her top priority is revitalizing retail. Biking and street entertainment are also concerns. She added that she feels Jazz in June is one of the most positive things in downtown.

Becky VandeBogart stated that she would like to get traffic redirected off of O Street, because that is the greatest pedestrian walkway with major businesses and residences.

Michelle Waite stated her top priority is to create a safe environment, because it enhances the University's mission as a partner in downtown.

Jon Weinberg noted that his top priority is to make downtown the focal point with the University and state capitol featured.

Cecil Steward stated that downtown should be a showpiece for not only all the pedestrian

activities and social life, but it also should be a model of sustainability.

Jessica Kennedy commented that, first, she would like to encourage and sustain a vibrant arts and cultural community. Secondly, she feels it is important to have local or regional businesses which encourage local economic development.

Dan Massoth noted that he feels the challenge is getting people to come to downtown after 5:00 p.m. The way to accomplish that is to focus on housing, which will help drive retail. A convention center or arena is an anchor to downtown.

Sachit Nadkarni stated that he would like to create a '24/7' downtown, and not just a Monday through Friday downtown.

Will Scott stated that his top priority is to identify and capitalize on the synergies of public and private sectors. A focal point or gathering place for a convenient, family-friendly downtown is important.

Kent Seacrest stated that he would like to see a University/retail corridor. Parking and transit have not always interfaced well. He also wonders if there is compatibility between our one-way pairs and walkability. He feels that certain urban zones in downtown should have a more softness in the urban landscape.

Terry Werner stated that one priority is to have a walkable, bikeable community which utilizes public transit. He would like to see fewer parking garages in downtown and a public square that is multi-use. A big part of that is defining Lincoln's architectural identity. It is important to connect the Haymarket, downtown, UNL, and government. Inner city parks are also important.

Jon Camp believes that the time has come to have concentric, rectangular shuttles. The idea would be to go on the perimeter. He disagrees with the idea that we need bicycles downtown; instead, he believes that we need accessible bicycle entries into downtown where people could park their bicycles and then walk into downtown. This is more of a pedestrian friendly environment and creates the market place concept. He views our paired one-ways as urban boulevards.

Mr. Crandall thanked the members for their input. He then briefly discussed the committee's involvement in the upcoming public meeting. The format will be fairly straightforward. Following the workshop on August 10th, they will meet with the committee to discuss the results of the workshop.

Mr. Weinberg directed the group to the document titled *Meeting and Process Protocol* and asked if there was any discussion regarding the content of this document. Michelle Waite made a motion to approve the draft, seconded by Jessica Kennedy. All members in attendance voted to approve the document.

Polly McMullen presented an outline of the proposed public outreach plan for the Downtown Master Plan. The key audience includes downtown stakeholders, neighborhoods adjacent to downtown, opinion leaders, policy makers and elected officials, community organizations, and

the general public.

She then reviewed some strategies for reaching these audiences. These include utilizing DLA and City databases and DAT networks for mailings and communication; conducting a briefing session for local media prior to August 1st; continuing to update local media; utilizing Channel 5 programming; establishing a Speakers Bureau to do presentations; and utilizing limited advertising.

Ms. McMullen concluded by noting that the most immediate need is to publicize the August 10th workshop.

Mr. Steward stated that there are a number of student groups and schools who may have an interest in this study and asked for them to be included in the process.

Mr. Weinberg adjourned the meeting at 9:18 a.m.

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